

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claims 1 and 2 (Cancelled)

3. (Withdrawn) A container for sterilization comprising: a containing section in which a material to be sterilized is stored; an intake port and an exhaust port of a gas, at least either one of which is connectable to a gas circulation mechanism to circulate the gas inside the containing section; and a germ trapping filter disposed at least in the intake port.

4. (Withdrawn) The container for sterilization according to claim 3, wherein the container can be autoclaved.

5. (Withdrawn) The container for sterilization according to claim 3, wherein the gas circulation mechanism is a vacuum pump disposed in an autoclave device.

6. (Withdrawn) The container for sterilization according to claim 3, wherein the gas circulation mechanism is a pressurizing device which is detachably attached to the material to be sterilized and which changes a pressure inside the material.

7. (Withdrawn) A container for sterilization comprising: a containing section in which a material to be sterilized is stored; a connection section connected to means for supplying and discharging fluid that cools or sterilizes the material, provided in the containing section and configured to supply and discharge the fluid to and from the containing section; and a blocking mechanism provided in the connection section and configured to supply and discharge the fluid while the connection section remains connected to the means for supplying and discharging the fluid, and to block off a passage for supplying and discharging the fluid while the connection section remains disconnected from the means for supplying and discharging the fluid.

8. (Withdrawn) The container for sterilization according to claim 7, further comprising a germ trapping filter disposed in the connection section.

Claims 9–12 (Cancelled)

13. (New) A sterilization apparatus comprising:

a chamber configured to contain an item to be sterilized and having elements which item sterilize the item to be sterilized with steam, at high temperature and high pressure;
an opening/closing mechanism which opens and closes the chamber;
a moving element having a tray configured for placement therein of the item to be sterilized, and a fluid supply member configured to supply fluid for cooling the item, the moving element being movable back and forth between an inside and an outside of the chamber; and
a control member configured to move the moving element, with the item to be sterilized on the tray thereof, to the inside of the chamber for sterilization treatment with the steam at high temperature and high pressure, and, the control member, after the sterilization treatment, configured to open the chamber and move the moving element, with the sterilized item, to the outside of the chamber, with the fluid supply member configured to cool the sterilized item with cooling fluid outside of the chamber.

14. (New) A sterilization apparatus comprising:

a chamber configured to contain an item to be sterilized and having elements which sterilize the item to be sterilized with steam, at high temperature and high pressure;
an opening/closing mechanism which opens and closes the chamber;
a container having a containing section configured to store the item to be sterilized, and having a fluid supply port which supplies and discharges fluid to separately sterilize and cool the stored item;
a moving element having a tray for placement therein of the container with stored item for sterilization, the moving element being movable back and forth from inside the chamber to outside of the chamber; and
a control member configured to control movement of the moving element on which the container with stored item is placed, the control member controlling supply of sterilization liquid

via the fluid supply section to carry out sterilization treatment of the item inside the chamber, and, after the sterilization treatment, opens the chamber and moves the moving mean and container outside the chamber, and supplies cooling fluid to the chamber via the fluid supply port to carry out cooling treatment of the container and items outside the chamber and, wherein an air feed element is connected to the fluid supply port and the fluid is air.

15. (New) The sterilization apparatus of claim 13, wherein the apparatus is configured to cool the item outside the chamber without cooling the inside of the chamber.

16. (New) A method of sterilizing an item with the sterilization apparatus of claim 13 comprising the steps of:

- a) placing the item to be sterilized into the tray of the moving element;
- b) moving the moving element, with the item to be sterilized on the tray, into the sterilizing chamber and closing the chamber with the opening/closing mechanism;
- c) sterilizing the item within the chamber with steam at high temperature and high pressure;
- d) opening the chamber with the opening/closing mechanism, after completion of sterilization of the item, and moving the moving element with the sterilized item in the tray, outside of the chamber; and
- e) cooling the sterilized item outside of the chamber with fluid from the fluid supply member of the moving element.

17. (New) A method of sterilizing an item, with the sterilization apparatus of claim 14, comprising the steps of:

- a) placing the item to be sterilized into the containing section of the container;
- b) moving the moving element with the item to be sterilized in the container, into the sterilizing chamber and closing the chamber with the opening/closing mechanism;
- c) sterilizing the item within the chamber with fluid from the fluid supply port at high temperature and high pressure;

- d) opening the chamber with the opening/closing mechanism after completion of sterilization of the item and moving the moving element with the sterilized item in the container, outside of the chamber; and
 - e) cooling the sterilized item outside of the chamber with air from the fluid supply member.
18. (New) The method of claim 16, wherein the item is an endoscope.
19. (New) The method of claim 17, wherein the item is an endoscope.